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DELIVERED BEFORE

"The Associated Disciples of Washington,"

25-10

ON THE 22^D OF FEBRUARY, 1812.

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE

INSTITUTION.

By SAMUEL L. KNAPP, Esq.

NEWBURYPORT:

FROM THE PRESS OF E. W. ALLEN.

1812.

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At the Anniversary Meeting of the "ASSOCIATED DISCIPLES OF
WASHINGTON," held February 22, 1812,

VOTED,—That Dr. LAWRENCE SPRAGUE, Mr. ARCHIBALD
M'PHAIL, and Mr. PAUL NOYES, be a Committee to present the
thanks of the Society to SAMUEL L. KNAPP, Esq. for the elegant
and patriotic Oration pronounced before them, this day; and to re-
quest a copy for the press.

Attest, JOHN R. HUDSON, Rec. Sec'y.

ORATION.

THIS is the birth day of Washington. He was a philanthropist of unalloyed benevolence, a warrior of unparalleled success, a statesman of consummate sagacity, and a patriot without reproach. When living he was more loved and honored than any man who had lived before him, and when dead was more widely and deeply lamented than any man who had died before him. Twelve years have passed away since this country, with ten thousand tongues bewailed, in all the eloquence of grief, his exit to eternity.

Friend of man, saviour and father of thy country, sainted spirit, if thou dost behold the fallen state of thy once beloved country, how keen a pang must even now pierce thy heart, otherwise replete with joys of immortality ! Yes, methinks I see the departed father of America, before the throne of the Arbiter of Nations, with eyes moistened with such tears as angels shed, supplicating mercy for a people degenerate and ungrateful to Heaven, and madly piercing their own vi-

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tals ; that the demon of discord may no longer drive them upon destruction, that they may return to reason, correct principles and sound policy. Let us, my associated friends, enquire what that policy and those principles were, by the operation of which, from a handful we became a nation, and which filled our basket and our store, caused joy and mirth to be heard in our streets, and made America the envy of nations, and another name for rational liberty. Let us then examine the causes which have enfeebled our powers, exhausted our resources, and made us a reproach, a proverb, a hissing and a by-word among the nations : And if there are any remedies for these evils let us investigate and ascertain them.

We will not detain you to relate the painful, but glorious history of our revolution ; for we have dwelt often and long upon its distresses, its hopes and its triumphs, but will commence at that period of awful rest when, exhausted by loss of blood and sustenance, America,—“ the battle done,” bowed her soul to the God of Armies, with a heart throbbing with the remembrance of her sufferings, and a head aching with projects for future days.

If we look back to the conclusion of our war we shall find the situation of our country—was poverty, weakness and anarchy.—Our treasury

was exhausted and we were almost bankrupt. At length a constitution was formed, which binding all left each one free. A constitution, which is in theory, a combination of all that is excellent in every government.—Our Sages drew not from one fountain alone ; for we discover principles in our government drawn from the wild independent spirit of Scythia, from the wisdom of Grecian Laws, from Roman institutions, and all the modern governments of Europe. This constitution brought national and individual energies into action. Industry was every where seen. Our commerce grew with astonishing rapidity, Our ships were found in every part of the world. On the north-western coast they were purchasing of the wild and savage nations their furs. On the other continent trafficking for every article from the iron and hemp of Russia to the silks of Persia, “and the spices of the Islands of the sea.” Americans were once found every where in pursuit of riches. The classic traveller met them among the tombs of the Antients, and the Pilgrim found them as he journied to Mecca or Sinai. Truly it may be said the harvest of the river was her revenue, and she was a mart of nations, a people whose merchants were princes, and whose traffickers were the honorable of the earth.

Washington and his compatriots understood the true principles of national dignity ; the pow-

er and consequence we had in Europe, and effected treaties with the different nations, that contain more generous and expansive principles of national law than can be found in history. The offices of government were filled with men of correct views, honorable feelings, and tried virtues. The measures pursued by Washington not only gave us peace, prosperity and praise, but habits to sentiment and elevation to intellect. The refinement of modern Europe was incorporated with the stern and primitive manners of our country, and the union exhibited strength without ferocity, and taste without sensuality. Under this wise administration the progress of civilization was wonderfully rapid. The charms of literature reached the humblest walks of life, and changed roughness and barrenness to courtesy and knowledge. In remote country villages were found men capable of filling high offices of trust and honor. While the active, industrious, and enterprising were gaining wealth, genius was developing itself in useful inventions, and devising plans of general utility;—and in fine, the whole system of administration was formed with so much wisdom, and put in motion by such admirable policy, that we became a theme for speculative philosophers, and a pattern for statesmen. All the measures of Washington were open, bold and fair, no mean subterfuges, no equivocal con-

duct, no paltry double-dealing, disgraced his administration. He was a stranger to that miserable jargon of fear, phrenzy and hypocrisy ; that despicable evasion of important subjects, by minute attention to trivial matters, which have so often insulted the ears of our present legislators. Washington's advice to congress, his recommendations, his legacies, his interchange of offices of civility, were expressed in language polished as that written at Athens, and plain, pointed, and pithy as that spoken at Sparta. He did not give us a few sentiments only on the great belligerents, and occupy whole columns on our red brethren.

Fain would I draw a vail over the fallen fortunes of my country, and dwell with lingering delight on that era of happiness, that reign of Apollo ; but strict duty, stern necessity, and anxious wishes for our future welfare demand that we should boldly trace the progress of our degeneracy, and the baleful history of our debasement. In the morning of creation, the serpent lurked in the garden of God, to seduce innocence and destroy tranquillity ; and in our political paradise were spirits of the same bloated malignity, the same fascinating arts, and the same cursed falsehoods ; they poisoned the minds of the unwary, and ignorant, and foolishly ambitious, and they may now revel in the same joys which elat-

ed their great archetype, after the success of his labours.

Difficulties which at first bowed to the talents, and character of Washington, were soon discovered to exist among us. The extent of the country was too great for a perfect political sympathy between distant sections. Aspiring demagogues seized every prejudice and complaint, and alarmed, with the cry of danger to liberty, the jealous and uneasy.

At this time, the French revolution poured on the world a flood of loose sentiments of morality, and religion, extravagant notions of human perfectability, and fanciful, and delirious theories of government. These witcheries of folly, and wickedness drove from us that regard to sober things, that love of wholesome restraint, that dread of the consequences of vice, which is the preservation of laws and the stability of government. As soon as the standard of opposition was reared, hosts flocked to it daily. The unprincipled ambitious were there, as leaders, making inflammatory harrangues, and spreading infamous falsehoods. The restless and unhappy joined; for no change could bring them misery, and many of the timid followed from fear. We will not be so uncharitable as to suppose, that there were not some men of honest intentions who were gulled by specious arguments and

plausible subtleties. Young men were courted, and many of them at an age when they were incompetent judges of a proper course, were allured by promises of honor, and emolument; and when the reigns of government came into democratic hands, were rewarded by offices from which were thrust, the aged, poor, and infirm, who had shed their blood to obtain the revolution. How many from whom better things were expected? How many of fair promise, and virtuous commencement, have swerved from the true faith? But even in this dark hour of our political adversity, in this tremendous conflict against profligacy, in this appalling and overwhelming national shame, it lights a glow of pride on every honest cheek to view the still unbroken phalanx of federal worthies, that have not bowed the knee, nor uneased their armour, but incessantly fought with might and valour against the sweeping march of democracy. It may be thought improper to single from this sacred band, any individual worthy, but the truly great are not envious, and we will indulge ourselves, a moment, in pourtraying a statesman of our own Commonwealth, Harrison Gray Otis. From his cradle as from Plato's, swarmed the Hyblean bees, and left the honies of eloquence on his tongue. Minerva was his tutelar Goddess, but the Graces had no small share in his education. His polit-

ical course was early shaped, and from the dawn of manhood to this his meridian day, he has been a firm, undeviating disciple of Washington. Long in public life, he has constantly been the champion of the cause he espoused. In every political contest he has carried terror, and dismay into the ranks of his opponents, searched the dark caverns of corruption and intrigue, and dragged, with Herculean strength, each Cacus to the light, and held him up for the contempt and derision of the world. Democracy knew his worth, and has used every endeavour to allure him to come over to her cause. Mighty meads of honor have been hinted as his rewards, but he did not yield. We love him, for he has frequently turned aside from his labours, and with reverence, and homage, sacrificed at the tomb of the immortal Hamilton. No envy, which disturbs little minds, chafed his breast, but penetrated with grief he shed upon Hamilton's grave, such tears as genius weeps at the loss of kindred souls.

The most deeply shaded picture, that imagination can paint, of the situation of our country, gives but an imperfect impression of the truth. Her commerce gone, her treasury exhausted, and the most inventive financiers incapable of forming any plan to replenish it, save the miserable expedients of loans or direct taxes :—Indi-

viduals, who lately were opulent, and in extensive business, "whose words would pass for more than they were worth," straightened, embarrassed, making shifts, and use managements, that in better days they would have despised, and finally losing property, and reputation together, are but some of the faint outlines of the reality. This demoralizing effect of the present system is most of all to be deplored. It is painful to see ruined families, but it is more painful to see so many ruined characters. Loss of property, disappointed hope, abortive exertions, united with evil bodings for the future are sufficient to destroy that strict punctuality, that zealous regard to pledges of honor, without which the lofty character of a merchant would dwindle to a wretched sharper.

The rage of politics has broken down the mounds of civil order, and trampled on domestic peace. The Judiciary, that noblest bulwark against "the spasms of infuriated man," that last rampart which anarchy attacks, has been outrageously assailed; and indeed all its minor parts have been moulded to suit the demagogues of the day. This Temple of Justice, where I now stand, was lately honoured, probably for the last time, by the official presence of a man, whose character exhibits the "hardihood of antiquity." Who in the business of his country was distin-

guished for independence, and intrepidity. He was distant, and severe to the disorderly, and intriguing ; but bland, and conciliatory to the intelligent, and worthy ; and now, deprived of all offices by an ungrateful people, lives a noble example of that loftiness, and irresistible energy imparted by virtue. Essex was the birth place, and is the present residence of this patriot ; and her sons will mention the name of Pickering, with pride, as long as they can appreciate greatness, or love independence. The Judges of the Supreme Court of our State stand like a group of mountain oaks, lofty and lonely ; the forest once around them having been rived, and schathed by the lightning, or consumed by the flames ; but how long the whirlwinds of faction may spare them ; God only knows.

If this is our deplorable condition, in what consists our hopes ? In a large body of firm and steadfast federalists, who have undauntedly withstood every shock ; the head of the heap, of first weight and most excellent flour, from which the chaff has been separated. Rectitude of mind, a conscience approving their former inflexibility, and perseverance, and which still urges them to make resistance, is worth more to these men than the highest emoluments of office, or any measure of perishable praise. Making the worst

calculations for poor human nature you can, these men will not grow tame, nor their numbers be diminished ; for the loaves and fishes are all distributed, and our opponents have nothing left to gratify ambition, to tempt avarice, or ensnare poverty.

But however exalted the deeds, and pure the patriotism of the present actors on the busy scene of life, the perfect day of new things must be looked for from the rising race. With strength yet unseen, and unexercised, with knowledge drawn from pure fountains, with every motive to exertion, they will come forward to retrieve their country's name. They will not feel the friendships, nor hatreds which were produced by the revolution ; but will have a fair opportunity to judge nations by the scale of honor and probity. Yes, my associated friends, there will speedily be a wide stage for you to act on. The names now most bruited through the land will soon be lost, and forgotten. The most obstreperous notes of Fame have in them the least immortality ; the ear of Time will not catch them, nor will he write them in his eternal annals.

It is time to pause, and turn from this general view, and develope the designs of our institution. A knowledge of the alarming crisis in the affairs of our country, a belief that something might be

done to rouse us from despondency, and a wish to assist those who are manfully stemming the current of oppression, and bearing the heat and burthen of the day, was the origin of this association. The means to produce these ends are a studious attention, a strict adherence, and a sacred regard to the principles of Washington ; with an unceasing assiduity in propagating these principles by every fair, honorable, and lawful method. Virtue is often slothful, and indifferent, while vice is active, insinuating, and seductive ; therefore, we must not grow disgusted with negligence, and want of energy nor vexed with intimations of want of success. Every thing that is valuable is attained with great difficulty, and nothing with more labour, and pains than the blessings of good government. Faint hearts would not have poured out their blood at the straits of Thermopylæ, nor feeble hands gained the battle of Marathon. The price of liberty is high, and the mean, cowardly, and slothful can never make the purchase. The most popular governments are more frequently in jeopardy than any others. It was a Roman maxim, and full of wisdom, never to despair of the Commonwealth ; and it should be our motto under oppression and in the worst of times. In one word, our whole duty consists in acting with vigour

unitedly, what in duty we were bound to perform separately.

If prudence, intelligence and zeal are found among us, every friend of good government will be our friend, and this society embrace the aged and wise as well as the youthful and gay—I believe in such a result, I will enjoy such anticipations, and lift my voice to this assembly as members of this association.

Although, we have all one common interest yet as there are some circumstances peculiar to us, at different ages, you will permit me to address you more particularly as if of different classes. You, my venerable political fathers, have seen much of national vicissitude, and of the instability of man. You have witnessed the creative power of patriotic union, and the desolating effects of party discord. You have seen a nation born, watched its wonderful progress in size, beauty and strength, and alas ! you now witness its premature decrepitude. You have seen this nation by mysterious artifices lulled to sleep, shorn of its locks, and deprived of its eyes, and near being delivered up to the Phillistines, alternately to grind in their prison, or to make them sport for their *Dagon*. If this country utterly fall, you and your compatriots must stand acquitted ; all that men could do you have done. Still aged as you are you must not ungird your armour, nor

quit the field, your counsels must direct our movements, and your presence animate us. If withdrawn from the conflict, thousands despairing of the cause will desert our standard. Your wisdom, experience, and long tried love of your country, give us confidence in you as our leaders, and cheer us with the hope of success. The cause of freedom is not desperate. Maimed, blinded and misled as this nation is, it may still be renovated. The spirit of independence slumbers but is not dead. Superficials have been perfidiously administered to the people to produce this lethargy; an antidote must be found, that this sleep be not unto death. The present time promises some success in applications. Symptoms begin to appear, which indicate that this lethargy may soon be terminated. Strong palpitations and spasms are seen. The senses are occasionally unlocked; and there appears a restlessness and writhing of the whole system. These may be indications of approaching dissolution, but I trust they are those of recovery. I cannot but hope, that, before you are called to that rest, which remaineth for those worn out in the labours of virtue, you will see our country united, and prosperous. If this should not be the case, do not think that your toils, and anxieties are useless. Your memories, and characters will lead your descendants into political rectitude. Although your

your motives and actions may have been misrepresented, your plans thwarted; your characters defamed, and your hopes disappointed by faction, your labours for your country's welfare will not be lost. "God rewardeth the patriot."

Upon you, my friends, who are of that age which is free from the precipitancy of youth; and which promises strength, and justness of conception, and promptitude of action, your country has great claims. As in religion we cannot expect salvation by crying, Lord ! Lord ! while we do not the things he says, so in our national politics it will profit us nothing to cry, patriotism ! patriotism ! if we neglect the duties it enjoins. Knowledge and religion are the pillars by which liberty is supported. If these are weakened the edifice totters ; if they are destroyed, it falls. You must therefore readily and constantly give your voice, your exertions, your examples and a portion of your property, for the support of those institutions whose object is to promote virtue, knowledge, and religion, even if they are not modelled, and regulated precisely according to your wishes. These institutions are anchors which may enable us to ride out many a storm, but if these are lost nothing can save us from being wrecked upon rocks and quicksands. You must be constantly upon the watch against intrigue and artifice, for democra-

cy is perpetually in ambush and springs upon its prey in the dark. You must act in harmony. One common interest, the independence and happiness of your country, must bind you to each other. Occasional differences of opinion and clashings of private interest must be sacrificed. Those who rather than make this sacrifice should embrace democracy, would be but little better than he, who, to revenge a trifling injury received from one of his brethren should thrust a poinard into the heart of their common mother. Freedom was your inheritance, and you must transmit it to your children, lest they should hereafter have cause to exclaim,—behold! the ruins of the goodly fabric of liberty, founded by the valour, raised by the toil, and cemented with the blood of our ancestors, but wrested from our fathers, and demolished before their eyes. Our fathers have indeed given us the blood of freemen, but left us slavery for our patrimony. At the view of this picture I see the breast of the parent, and the patriot swell with indignation. Indulge these emotions; they are a security against degradation and a pledge to your children and your country.

Many of you my younger friends, are in a situation somewhat like that in which Hercules is represented to have been, when solicited by his celestial visitants to decide on a course of life. Each proposed her own system, and used her own

means and arguments to persuade the youth—Federalism and Democracy, like Minerva and Venus; solicit you to decide on a future political course of life. In some respects, however, your situation differs from that of Hercules. Those who solicit you are not both of *celestial* origin, neither does democracy exactly represent the lovely and fascinating appearance of the soft Goddess of pleasure.—Hearken to Democracy. “Sweet sons of liberty, it is time for you to employ your thoughts upon that way of life you ought to choose; be my friends and follow me: I will lead you into the possession of power, offices, and honours. You need not be at the trouble of acquiring what is absolutely called merit. It will be no recommendation to you in obtaining my distinctions; the less you have of it, the greater will be your claims. Some sacrifices are to be made, and some qualifications to be possessed, before you can enjoy the full fruition of my favours. Have you written upon your heart or bound about your neck the instructions of a bigotted father, they must be erased from your heart, and torn from your neck, or they will frequently incommode and obstruct you, in your career of glory. Do you cherish what is denominated a sense of honour, you must crush the viper, or it will frequently sting you. Do you blush at the mention of a fault, you must rid yourself of that

weakness, or it will frequently expose you ; but if you blush only at the mention of your virtues, you need not, after a few months, be under any apprehensions. You must begin by denouncing the Federalists as tyrants, although you may be fully convinced, that they are the only true friends to liberty. You must curse Great-Britain, yea, curse bitterly; spurn regular occupation, and harangue at the corners, in tippling shops and taverns, where you will always find a full audience of the sons of freedom. As all offices in a republican government lie open to eloquence, if you have a weak voice, spend some time upon the sea beach, and exercise your lungs till you can outroar the roaring of the billows, that dash against the shore ; for strength of voice is the first, second, and third requisite for an orator. When you have attained to this, command what honour, or office, you will ; it is yours. If you wish for riches get appointed Treasurer of State, or Collector of the revenue. If conscience, that bugbear of federalists, approach you, and tell you that you must be accountable hereafter, disregard it, for if you should hereafter be called to account, there will be so many of you that you may easily excite an insurrection, like your great predecessors.

Will you hearken for a few moments to the voice of Federalism. “ Young men, I offer my-

self to you, because, I know you descended from patriotic parents, and give proofs of the descent by your love to virtue ; this makes me hope, that you will gain both for yourself and me an immortal reputation. But before I invite you into my society, and friendship, I will be open and sincere with you, and must lay down this, as an established truth, that there is nothing truly valuable, which can be purchased without pains, and labour. Heaven hath set a price upon every thing great and noble. Before you become my friends you must be the true friends of your country. Her safety must be your care, her prosperity the object of your exertions, and her honour, your pride. You must be supporters of order, guardians of religion, and promoters of useful knowledge. You must carefully watch the removing of ancient political land-marks, remembering that innovation is not reform. Be not solicitous for public honors and distinctions. Be anxious to deserve, but not to obtain them. If, indeed you embark in my cause you must be prepared for your duty in any station, not only when the winds of Heaven gently waft you, but when the waves toss, the tempest roars, and death threatens. Your reward shall be that of a patriot, conscious worth, and approving Heaven. Trust not the voice of democracy. She pretends

to be the friend of republican government, but her government is anarchy, "uproar and wild misrule." She boasts much of liberty, but her liberty is licentiousness ; and her freedom is slavery. She offers you honours, but her honours are infamy. She engages to exalt you to office, but her promotion would degrade you. She promises you power, but her power must be used only in destroying what is fair, and good. She may offer you riches, but her gifts must be the price of your integrity and the fruit of peculation. Embrace her not, walk not after her, her steps lead down to the chambers of death.

Your fathers fought for me, cheerfully laboured in my service ; protected my honour, and some of them have already gone to receive the rewards of virtue. Their blood flows in your veins, let their principles animate your hearts, and make you emulous of their worth. Liberty and independence are your birthright, let them not be obtained from you by a price, nor stolen from you by subtilty. Believe me, my young friends, if ever you wear the chains of slavery, they will be forged by Democracy."

I have, my associated friends, expressed these political opinions, honestly, and fearlessly ; they are such as, I believe, you cherish and will defend. No rancour, no malice, no irritation tinges

a single thought I have laid before you ; they are the undisguised sentiments of my soul, the deliberate dictates of my understanding, spoken with republican freedom to true republicans of independent minds.

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